CHAPTER - III

A CRITIQUE OF GANDHIAN LEADERSHIP

Appreciation of Gandhiji by Subhas Bose

Gandhi was the most influential personality of Indian freedom movement. All the major initiatives from 1920 to 1945 emanate from him. Subhas Bose was also influenced and inspired by him. Subhas Bose has given his appreciation of Gandhiji in two ways.

1. Subhas Bose has offered his comments on the leadership of Gandhiji in a general way. He has highlighted the positive as well as the negative points of Gandhian leadership.

2. Subhas Bose has offered his critical observations on some definite movements and actions of Gandhiji.

Positive Aspects of Gandhian Leadership

Subhas Bose had devoted a full chapter—Chapter 16 in The Indian Struggle, to evaluate the role of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian history.¹

Subhas thought that the role of a man in history depends upon two factors. His physical and mental equipment, the environment and the needs of the times in which he was born. There was something in Mahatma Gandhi which appealed to the mass of the Indian people. Born in another country like Russia, Germany or Italy, he might have been a complete misfit. His doctrines and mode of living would have led him to

¹ Bose, Subhas Chandra, The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942 (Bombay: Asia Publishing House), 1964.
the cross or to the mental hospital. In India it was different. His simple
life, his vegetarian diet, his goat's milk, his day of silence, every work, his
habit of squatting on the floor instead of sitting on a chair, worked him
out as one of the Mahatmas of the old. These habits brought him nearer to
his people. They thought that he was a product of Indian soil. Gandhiji
spoke in a language that was understood by the Indian masses. He did not
quote Herbert Spencer or Edmund Burke. He spoke of the *Bhagvad Gita*
and the *Ramayana*, people understood the terms like *Ramrajya, Ahimsa*
and *Brahmacharya*.

The time was also favourable to Gandhiji. Gandhiji would not
succeed at a time of revolutionary movement like the revolution of 1857
when people had arms and were able to fight at that time. They wanted a
leader who could lead them in war. Gandhiji could not provide an
effective leadership in such a situation. But when Mahatma Gandhi
emerged on the political scene India was disarmed. The armed struggle
against the mighty British Empire could not succeed. The superior
equipment of Britain could smash any armed uprising. In the words of
Subhas Bose: "In 1920, India stood at cross-roads—constitutionalism was
dead, armed revolution was sheer madness. But silent acquiescence was
impossible. The country was groping for a new method and looking for a
new leader. Then there sprang up India's man of destiny, Mahatma
Gandhi, who had biding his time all these years and quietly preparing
himself for the quiet task ahead of him. He knew himself, he knew his
country's needs and he knew also that during the next phase of India's
struggle, the crown of leadership would be on his head. No false sense of
modesty troubled him. He spoke with a firm voice and the people
obeyed."\(^2\)

The Indian National Congress during the freedom struggle was the creation of Mahatma Gandhi. The Congress Constitution was his handiwork. From a talking body he converted the Congress into living and fighting organisation. It had its ramification in every town and village in India. Nobility of character and capacity to suffer were made the essential tests of leadership. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian National Congress was the largest and the most representative political organisation in the country.3

Gandhiji achieved success by his single hearted devotion, has relentless will and his indefatigable labour. He was not too revolutionary for the majority of his country. His policy was one of unification. He wanted to unite Hindu and Muslim, the high caste and the low caste, the capitalist and the labourer, the landlord and the peasant. By his humanitarian outlook and his freedom from hatred, he was able to raise sympathy even in his enemy's camp.4

Subhas Bose has tried to identify the reasons for the success of Gandhiji. It was a known fact that Gandhiji had in his earlier life considerably influenced by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the ideas of Leo Tolstoy. It can not be claimed that he was altogether original in his ideas or moral in his practice. But his real merit was a two-fold one. He translated the teachings of Christ and the ideas of Leo Tolstoy and Thoreau into actual practice. He demonstrated that it was possible to fight for liberty without resorting to violence. Gandhiji used non-cooperation not for remedying local grievances, but for winning national freedom and he well nigh demonstrated that it was possible to paralyse the civil administration of a foreign government thereby and bring the government

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3 Ibid., pp. 294-95.
4 Ibid., p. 295.
to its knees. A happy combination of factors helped to bring Mahatma Gandhi to the forefront in 1920. The attempted revolution during the Great War had failed and the Revolutionary party had been crushed. There was consequently no possibility of another revolution in 1920. The country wanted a bold and vigorous policy on the part of the Congress and the only alternative was a movement like the one which Mahatma Gandhi started. The death of Lokamanya Tilak on the eve of the Calcutta Congress removed from the field the only leader who could challenge Gandhiji. Gandhiji was fully prepared to assume the undisputed leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1920. Through strict discipline he had equipped himself for a life of suffering and during the apprenticeship in Indian politics, from 1914 to 1920, he had been able to gather round him a band of loyal and trusted followers. Among the prominent leaders who joined Mahatma Gandhi were C.R. Das from Calcutta, Pandit Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal Nehru from Allahabad, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant from Nainital, Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab, Vitthalbhai Patel and Vallabhbhai Patel from Bombay, N.C. Kelkar from Poona, Dr. Moonje and Mr Abhyankar from Central Provinces, Rajgopalchari, A. Rangaswami Iyenger and Satyamurthi from Madras, Mr Prakasam from Hyderabad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad from Bihar, Dr. Husain from Delhi. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Shaukat Ali and Maulana Mohammed Ali were the eminent Muslim leaders who supported Mahatma Gandhi. Many well to do lawyers gave up their professional work in response to the appeal of the Congress.

Gandhiji made use of Satyagraha in South Africa as well as in India a number of times with very good results. Lastly, Gandhiji had gathered round his head a halo of saintliness. This was of considerable value to him. Gandhiji emerged as the virtual dictator of the Congress.
The non-cooperation movement gave the country a highly organised party organisation. Before that the Congress was a constitutional party and mainly a talking body. Mahatma Gandhi gave it - a new constitution and a nationwide base. He converted it into a revolutionary organisation. The tricolour national flag red, green and white was adopted all over the country and assumed great importance. Uniform slogans were repeated everywhere and a uniform policy and ideology gained currency from one end of India to the other. The English language lost its importance and the Congress adopted Hindi as the common language for the whole country. Khadi became the official uniform for all Congressmen. In short, all the features of a modern political party became visible in India. The credit for such achievements belonged to the leader of the movement, Mahatma Gandhi.5

The trial of Mahatma Gandhi was an historic event. In describing the trial proceedings, C.R. Das in his presidential speech at the Gaya Congress in December 1922, drew an analogy with the trial of Christ before Pontius Pilate.6 In the trial Mahatma Gandhi made a lengthy statement describing how from a staunch loyalist and cooperator he had become and uncompromising disaffectionist and non-cooperator. He ended his statement with these words: "The only course open to you, the Judge and the Sessions, is either to resign your posts and thus dissociate yourselves from evil if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent, or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are

5 Ibid., p. 70.
6 Ibid., p. 74.
assisting to administer are good for the country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public work."\(^7\)

The English Judge Mr. Broomfield, sentenced Gandhi to six years imprisonment. On February 27th, 1930, Mahatma Gandhi announced his plan of campaign. The next four moves taken by him stand out for all time to come as some of the most brilliant achievements of his leadership. They reveal the height to which his statesmanship could ascend in times of crisis. Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that the movement would be non-violent but it would not be stopped so long there was a single civil resister left free or alive.\(^8\)

Gandhiji's march to Dandi was an event of historical importance which would rank on the same level with Napoleon's to march on his return from Elba or Mussolini's march the Rome when he wanted to seize political power.\(^9\) Fortunately for Mahatma, he had a wonderfully good press within India and outside. In India, for days and days, every detail connected with the march found the widest publicity. The march on foot enabled him to rouse the entire countryside through which he passed. It also gave him time to work up the feelings of the country as a whole. If Gandhiji had travelled by train, he could not make such an impact. While Gandhiji was marching from village to village an intense propaganda was carried on asking the people to give up service under the British Government. At every step Mahatma Gandhi received warm welcome. He appealed to women of India to join civil disobedience movement. The appeal was transmitted all over the country. It had a magic effect even the

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 179-80.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 182.
women of the most orthodox and aristocratic families went to prison. What even may be the permanent value of the Poona Agreement, there is no doubt that the fast of Mahatma Gandhi had a permanent and far reaching effect in rousing the conscience of the Hindu community. It was a unique spectacle to see how the heart of the entire nation throbbed for one man. All sections of the Hindus were stirred to activity as they had never been before. The most important result of the epic fast was to give a powerful impact to the movement for the eradication of untouchability.

Subhas Bose made moving references to Mahatma Gandhi. While concluding his Presidential address at the Haripura Congress in February 1938. He hoped and prayed that Mahatma Gandhi might be spared to our nation for many years to come. India needed him to keep its people united. India needed him to keep freedom struggle free from bitterness and hatred. India needed him for the cause of Indian independence. India was fighting against world imperialism. India freed meant humanity saved.

The Gandhian Movement: A Synthesis

Subhas Bose wrote an essay on Forward Block in January 1941, during his secret sojourn in Kabul. He tried to interpret Indian nationalist movement in terms of dialectical process involving thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Subhas Bose considered the colonial rule as the thesis, liberal phase of Indian politics as antithesis and the Gandhian movement as the

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10 Ibid., pp. 182-83.
11 Ibid., p. 248.
12 Bose, Sisir K. and Sugata Bose (ed), The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (Delhi: Oxford University Press), 1997, p. 219. The title of the essay is Forward Block-Its justification. It was one of three documents delivered personally to Sarat Chandra Bose in Calcutta by Shri Bhagat Ram Talwar, Netaji’s escort from Peshawar to Kabul.
13 Ibid., pp. 300-09.
synthesis. In 1920, Gandhi took possession of the Indian National Congress and for two decades he maintained his hold. This was possible not merely because of Mahatma Gandhi’s personality but also because of his capacity to assimilate other ideas and policies. During its twenty years of domination of the Congress, whenever revolts appeared, the Gandhi movement took the wind of their sails by accepting many of their ideas and policies. When the Swaraj Party arose in 1923, the conflict that followed continued only for a time. At the Cawnpore Congress in 1925, the Swarajist policy of carrying non-co-operation inside the legislations was accepted by the Gandhiites and was thereupon adopted by the Congress as a whole. Again in 1928, at the Calcutta Congress there was a revolt against Gandhism on the issue of Independence. Mahatma Gandhi then advocated Dominion Status. Bose moved an amendment to the resolution of Mahatma Gandhi and called for complete independence. His amendment was defeated. But a year later at the Lahore Congress Mahatma Gandhi himself moved the resolution for complete independence.

By this process of assimilation, the Gandhi movement was able to maintain its progressive character and prevent the emergence of any big left wing movement. There was a temporary set back after Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931, but Gandhiji recovered lost ground when he launched civil disobedience movement in January 1932.

The Azad Hind Fauz founded by Subhas Bose crossed the Indo-Burma frontier on 18 March, 1944. It carried the armed struggle on the Indian soil. Subhas Bose in his address to Mahatma Gandhi in November 6, 1944, shows his deep anxiety for Gandhiji’s health. Subhas gave a detailed justification for his course of action. He paid handsome complements to Gandhiji’s leadership and sought the blessings and the
good wishes of the Father of Our Nation in holy war that was then raging in north-eastern India. Subhas confessed that in all the countries free from British influence that he had visited Gandhiji was held in the highest esteem as no other Indian political leader had been during the last century. The high esteem in which Gandhiji was held by patriotic Indians outside India and by foreign friends of India's freedom, was increased in hundred fold when he bravely sponsored the Quit India Resolution August 1942.  

Negative Aspects of Gandhian Leadership

While appreciating some positive aspects of Gandhian leadership, Subhas was also critical of some negative aspects of Gandhiji's stewardship.

Subhas had his first meeting with Mahatma Gandhi on July 16th, 1921, at Mani Bhavan in Bombay. Subhas asked a number of questions regarding the non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji. Subhas did not feel satisfied with the replies of Gandhiji. He felt that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which Gandhiji had formulated. Mahatmaji himself did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India to him cherished goal of freedom. Gandhiji had promised freedom in a year. It was not at all clear how could Britain agree to grant India independence within such a short time. To Gandhiji it was a question of faith. Possibly Gandhiji expected a change of heart on the part of the British Government leading to an acceptance of India's national demands.  

The Treaty of Severs published in the summer of 1920, gave rude shock to Indian Muslims. The Turkish empire was dismantled and the

15 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
Sultan of Turkey was humiliated. Mahatma Gandhi espoused the Muslim cause and started the non-cooperation movement. One of the objects of the movement was redress of Khilafat. The introduction of the Khilafat issue in Indian politics was unfortunate. Under Kamal Pasha Turkey emerged as a secular republic. In 1922, the institution of Khilafat was abolished and the Khalifa was exiled.16

Subhas Bose did not find any fault with Mahatma Gandhi for his intimate association with the Ali Brothers or connecting the Khilafat issue with the other national issues. But Gandhiji made a mistake by allowing the Khilafat Committee to be set up as an independent organisation, throughout the country quite apart from the Indian National Congress. The result of this was that when later on Kamal Pasha forced the Sultan to abdicate and abolished the office of the Khalifa, the Khilafat question lost all significance. The majority of the workers of the Khilafat organisation were absorbed by sectarian, reactionary and pro-British Muslim organisations. If no separate Khilafat Committees had been organised and all the Khilafatist Muslims had been persuaded to join the ranks of the Indian National Congress, they would have been absorbed by the Congress when the Khilafat issue became a dead one.

Mahatma Gandhi suspended the non-cooperation movement in February, 1922, as a result of the Chauri Chaura tragedy in a U.P. village near Gorakhpur. The police had opened a fire on a procession but when their ammunition was exhausted, they shut themselves up inside the building. The excited mob set fire to it. The members of the police force, twenty-two in number, were hacked to death.

16 Ibid., pp. 73-74.
The sudden suspension of the movement caused much resentment among important Congress leaders. The leaders took Gandhiji to task for punishing the whole country for the sin of a place. According to Subhas Bose, C.R. Das "beside himself with sorrow". Bose wrote "To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity". Subhas Bose quoted C.R. Das as saying that "the Mahatma opens a campaign in a brilliant fashion, he works it up with skill, he moves from success to success till he reaches the zenith of his campaign but after that he loses his nerve and to begins to falter."  

The end of non-cooperation marked the beginning of reaction. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested on 4th March, 1922 and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. In the opinion of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee set up by the Congress, non-cooperation had achieved little. The movement had failed to achieve its objective of securing the redress of Khilafat and Punjab Wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj. Subhas Bose attributed the failure of non-cooperation to Mahatma Gandhiji's faulty strategy. The promise of Swaraj within one year was not only unwise but childish.  

The sudden stoppage of the non-cooperation movement brought the Congress-League alliance to an end. The Hindu-Muslim unity forged during the common struggle began to disintegrate. Towards the end of 1921, the Moplah rising occurred in Malabar with the object of establishing a Khilafat State. The fierce Moplahs slaughtered not only a few British officials but far more of their Hindu neighbours. A series of  

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17 Ibid., pp. 69-74.
18 Ibid., p. 70.
19 Ibid., p. 175
communal riots raged with brief intervals for many years. The growth of religious element in Indian politics was an unhealthy development.

Though the leaders and the rank and file of the Swaraj Party had the highest respect for the personality of the Mahatma Gandhi, the Party was an anti-Gandhi Party. It was strong enough to force Gandhiji to voluntary retirement from politics. This retirement continued till the Calcutta Congress in December 1928.

According to Subhas Bose, Mahatma Gandhi came to be looked upon by the mass of the people as a Mahatma before he became the undisputed political leader of India. Consciously or unconsciously Gandhiji fully exploited the mass psychology of the people. In some parts of the country Gandhiji began to be worshipped as an Avatar to make matters worse, political issues were not discussed in the light of pure search. They were mixed up with ethical issues.

The Madras Congress in December 1927 passed a resolution proclaiming complete independence as its goal. Mahatma Gandhi described the resolution as hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed. The Calcutta Congress was held in 1928, under the presidency of Pandit Motilal Nehru. These were two groups in the Congress. The older group was content if they had a dominion form of government. The left wing addressed to the goal of complete independence. The main resolution of the Congress was moved by Mahatma Gandhi. It called for the setting up of the Dominion Status. Subhas Bose moved an amendment to the effect that the Congress would be content with nothing short of independence. The amendment was supported among others by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The amendment was lost by 973 votes to 1350. The followers of Mahatma Gandhi made it a question of confidence. They
gave out that if Gandhiji was defeated he would retire from the Congress. Many people voted for this resolution not out of conviction, but because they did not want to be party to forcing the Mahatma out of the Congress. The voting showed that the left wing was becoming stronger.

The next annual session of the Congress was held at Lahore under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru. The choice of Jawaharlal Nehru as Congress president lent a special glamour to the session. Nehru was an embodiment of the youthful ardour. The resolution for complete independence was moved by Mahatma Gandhi. The resolution declared complete independence as the goal of the Congress. As a preliminary towards organising a campaign for independence, the Congress resolved upon complete boycott of the Central and provisional legislatures constituted by the government. It called upon the Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating in future elections. It directed the present Congress members of the legislatures to resign their seats. The resolution appealed to the nation to carry on the constructive programme.

The Revival

Subhas Bose moved a resolution to the effect that the Congress should aim at setting up a parallel government in the country. This resolution was defeated. Subhas Bose observed that though the Congress accepted the goal of complete independence as its objective, no plan was laid down for reaching the goal. Subhas Bose was not included in the new Working Committee. Gandhiji said that he wanted a committee that would be completely of one mind. It became a question of the confidence in Gandhiji. As the House did not want to repudiate him, it had no option but give into his demand.
Subhas Bose has summed up the lessons of the Lahore Congress as follows: "Altogether the Lahore Congress was a great victory for the Mahatma. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the most prominent spokesmen of the left wing, was won over by him and the others were excluded from the Working Committee. The Mahatma could henceforward proceed with his own plans without fear of opposition within his Cabinet, and whenever any opposition was raised, he could always cover the public by threatening to retire from the Congress or to fast into death. From his personal point of view, it was the cleverest move with a subservient cabinet, it was possible for him to conclude the pact with Lord Irwin in March 1931, to have himself appointed, as the sole representative to the Round Table Conference, to conclude the Poona Agreement in September 1932 and do other acts which have done considerable disservice to the public cause."\textsuperscript{20}

While the Civil-Disobedience Movement was in progress the British government held the first Round Table Conference in London towards the end of 1930. The Congress did not participate in the Conference. Without the Congress, the Conference had been like a dramatic representation of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. To facilitate a compromise with the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi and the members of the Congress Working Committee were released in January, 1931. Mahatma Gandhi held negotiations with the Viceroy Lord Irwin and signed a pact with him on March 5, 1931. According to the terms of Gandhi-Irwin Pact the Viceroy agreed to (1) release all political persons including those convicted of violent offences; (2) restore confiscated property; (3) permit persons living within a certain distance of the seashore to collect on manufacture sale free of duty; (4) permit peaceful picketing of liquor,

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 208-09.
opium and foreign cloth shops. The Congress on its part undertook to (1) suspend Civil Disobedience, (2) give up its demand for an impartial inquiry into police excesses, and (3) participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference on the basis of Federation and Responsibility with reservations or safeguards in the interest of India.

Radical nationalists condemned the Pact as an abject surrender to imperialism. Jawaharlal Nehru felt a tremendous shock on account of the cause relating to safeguards. Indian youth was deeply stirred by the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. They were indignant Mahatma Gandhi's failure to secure pardon for them. Subhas Bose made the following criticism with regard to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

1. The Pact had gone with many petty and unnecessary details but had avoided the main issue of Swaraj.
2. The Conference was really no Round Table Conference because there was no finality about the decisions of the Conference. The whole matter was to be reconsidered by the British Parliament. In a real Round Table Conference the decisions are always final and binding on both parties. The name Round Table Conference had been used only to hoodwink foolish Indian politicians.
3. The Indian delegates to the Conference were to be selected not by the Indian people but by the British government.
4. The Conference would not be confined to the representatives of the two belligerent parties. Nondescripts of all kinds who had nothing to do with the fight for Swaraj, were to be there to throw obstacles in the path of the Indian nationalists.
5. The proposal of a Federation between nationalist British India and their nominees Indian Princes was an absurd one. The Princes or
their nominees would act as a dead weight against the national forces.

6. Safeguards take away what responsibility gives. It was a gross error on the part of the Mahatma to talk of safeguards in the interests of India. The only safeguard that the Indians wanted was liberty. The actual safeguards, were demanded by the Britishers and were against the interest, of Indians. It was wrong to induce the Indian people to accept such safeguards by saying that they were in the interests of India.

7. The amnesty provided under the Pact was inadequate because the following classes of political prisoners were included:

(a) The state prisoners and detenus imprisoned without trial. These were about one thousand prisoners in Bengal alone. (b) Prisoners convicted of revolutionary offences. (c) Prisoners under trial for alleged revolutionary offences. (d) The under trial prisoners in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. (e) Prisoners incarcerated in connection with labour strikes and other labour disputes. (f) The Garhwali soldiers who had been court-martialled and given heavy sentences for refusing to fire on unarmed citizens. (g) Prisoners sentenced in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement, the charges against whom referred to violence of some sort.

8. The demand originally made by Mahatma Gandhi for an inquiry into police atrocities during the civil disobedience movement was included from the Pact.²¹

²¹ Ibid., pp. 209-31
According to Subhas Bose the Gandhi-Irwin Pact proved to be not a blessing but a curse. The time was not opportune for an understanding of the sort attempted for the struggle should have been continued for some time longer. The pact contained nothing of value. These were no one in the working committee to point out the correct thing to Mahatma Gandhi. Subhas Bose felt that men with fixed ideas were not well qualified for political bargaining. So far as Gandhiji was concerned he alternated between obstinacy and leniency. He was also too susceptible to personal appeals. With such habits of mind, it was difficult to get the better of one's opponent in political bargaining. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was a great help to the Government. It gave them time to inquire more deeply with the tactics of the Congress and those after to perfect their machinery for dealing with that body in future.\(^{22}\)

In pursuance of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact Mahatma Gandhi participated in the second session of the Round Table Conference at London as the sole representative of the Congress. Subhas Bose considered this decision of the Congress as thoroughly wrong. Alone in an assembly of about one hundred men, with all kinds of nondescripts, turn keys and self-appointed leaders arranged against him, he has to be at a great disadvantage. He had no body at his side to back him up in the fight that he would have with the reactionary Muslim leaders. There was no help for that. The blind followers of the Mahatma were not expected to criticize him. Those who were not his unorthodox followers had no influence on him regardless of their character, wisdom, or experience.

Gandhiji reached London on September 12\(^{th}\) 1931. During his stay in London, between September 12th and December 1st, Mahatma Gandhi spoke twelve times at the Round Table Conference. During his

\(^{22}\) Ibid., pp. 218-231.
stay of nearly three months in England, Mahatma Gandhi had an exceedingly busy time. He overstrained himself. Some times he did not allow himself to have more than two hours sleep for days together. He met all sorts of people there. During week-ends he undertook tours to Cambridge or Oxford or Lancashire in order to awaken interest for India. There was lack of coordination and unity of purpose in all his activities. Indian members of the Round Table Conference complained that it was difficult to get at Mahatma Gandhi when they wanted him. Indian Liberal members of the Round Table Conference complained that instead of playing a lone hand, he could have rallied all the anti-communal forces and became a leader of the United Nationalist Party. The Mahatma's visit to England was badly planned his personal entourage did not consist of any advisers worth the name. Subhas Bose has identified a deeper cause which accounted for Gandhiji 's failure at the Round Table Conference. During his stay in England, Gandhi had to play two roles in one persons, the role of a political leader and that of a world teacher. Sometimes he conducted himself not as a political leader who had come to negotiate with the enemy, but as a master who had come to preach a new faith that of non-violence and world peace. Because of his second role, he had to spend much of his time with people who were quite useless in promoting his political mission.

Reviewing Gandhiji's visit to Europe Subhas Bose regretted that he spent so much of his time in England and so little on the continent. Even on the continent he did not devote sufficient time on attention to politicians, industrial magnates and other people who really counted in politics.

The first two sessions of the Round Table Conference had failed to resolve the baffling deadlock over the communal deadlock. At the end
of the second conference the British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald had told the delegates that while the primary responsibility for setting the problem by on the communities concerned. The British Government were determined that this disability should not be permitted to have been to progress. He declared that if an agreed solution was not forthcoming the British government would be compelled to apply a provisional scheme of its own. The outcome was the Communal Award which was published on 8th August, 1932. The most atrocious feature of the scheme was that the depressed classes were recognised as a distinct minority and given the right to choose their representatives through separate electorates with an additional vote in the general constituencies. The Communal Award was in keeping with the traditional British policy of accentuating communal divisions in India in order to neutralise the forces of Indian nationalism.

Mahatma Gandhi could not look the provision relating to the depressed classes. He went on a fast unto death to undo the communal award. The fast had the desired effect of surging the Hindu consciousness into action. By a result of the efforts of the leading public men a compromise formula was evolved which Mahatma Gandhi accepted with satisfaction and which Dr. B.R. Ambedkar signed somewhat half-heartedly. According to this formula the depressed classes were given more seats than the Communal Award offered them. But election for these seats was to be conducted in two stages. In a preliminary election the untouchables were to select from candidates for each seat on the basis of separate electorates. But the caste Hindus and Harijans were to vote jointly in the final election. In addition, depressed classes were given an additional vote in the election for general seats not reserved for them. The
agreement was known as Poona Pact. It was adopted on 26th September, 1932. The same day Gandhiji broke his fast.\textsuperscript{23}

Subhas has criticised the Poona Pact on the basis that it served advertise to a disproportionate degree the issue of the depressed classes. Hitherto the world had known only one issue relating to India, the political issue-India's grievance against England. Now, Mahatma Gandhi announced to the world that there was another issue-the internal issue of such vital importance to India that he was prepared to stake his life for it. British propagandists were not to take advantage of the opportunity. In September, 1932 the whole of Europe was told that the Mahatma was fasting because was against granting certain rights to the untouchables. The fast had another unfortunate effect which proved to be more serious. It served to side-track the political movement at a time when all possible attention should have been devoted to it.\textsuperscript{24}

Reviewing the year 1932, as a whole, one may say that the 'epic fast' of the Mahatma was the turning-point and from that moment onwards, the Government definitely got the better of the Congress. As the year came to a close, the thought that was uppermost in the minds of Congressmen was how to push on the anti-untouchability campaign. Resolutions were passed from many a platform, at the instance of the Congress leaders, asking the Viceroy to accord sanction to the Temple Entry Bills in the Madras Legislative Council and the Indian Legislative Assembly.

\textsuperscript{24} Bose, Subhas Chandra, The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942, op. cit., pp. 248-49.
On 8th May, 1933, the first day of the fast, he was released. The day after his release he suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement. Bose was upset at the sudden suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement. He wrote: "At first the Civil Disobedience campaign was suspended for six weeks. The suspension was subsequently extended for six weeks more, i.e. till the end of July. The sudden suspension of the campaign, without rhyme or reason, would under ordinary circumstances have produced a widespread revolt in the Congress organisation, but since he was in the middle of a fast, which could end fatally, all judgement was suspended for the time being. While suspending the Civil Disobedience campaign, the Mahatma made an appeal to the Government of India to withdraw the ordinances and release the civil disobedience prisoners. Now a settled government preserves a continuity of policy and cannot alter its policy overnight as an individual can. The Government's reply was, therefore, a refusal."  

Bose was in Vienna when the news regarding the fast appeared in the Continental Press. After fourteen months' incarceration when his health was in an alarming condition, Lieutenant-Colonel Buckley, IMS, of Lucknow, who had been treating him, recommended his transfer to Europe for treatment. Thereupon the Government of India permitted him to leave for Europe at his own financial responsibility. He was released at Bombay, and arrived in Vienna in March, 1933.

Bose himself recorded: "While responsible Congressmen in India were unwilling or afraid to speak out against the Mahatma after his surrender in May 1933, the following manifesto was issued by myself

25 Ibid., p. 261.
and Mr. Vithalbhai J. Patel, who was also undergoing treatment in Vienna, condemning the Mahatma's decision.”

“The events of the last thirteen years have demonstrated that a political warfare based on the principle of maximum suffering for ourselves and minimum suffering for our opponents cannot possibly lead to success. It is futile to expect that we can ever bring about a change of heart in our rulers merely through our own suffering and by trying to love them. And the latest action of Mahatma Gandhi in suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement is a confession of failure as far as the present method of the Congress is concerned. We are clearly of the opinion that as a political leader Mahatma Gandhi has failed. The time has therefore, come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method. For bringing about this reorganisation a change of leadership is necessary, for it would be unfair to Mahatma Gandhi to expect him to evolve or work a programme and method not consistent with his life-long principles. If the Congress as a whole can undergo this transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that a new party will have to be formed within the Congress, composed of all radical elements. Non-cooperation will have to be changed into a more militant one and the fight for freedom to be waged on all fronts.”

Owing to the preoccupation of the public over Mahatma Gandhi’s health, the manifesto did not, however, produce the effect which it would otherwise have. Even friends thought that it was an outrageous act to criticise the Mahatma when his life was in jeopardy because of the fast.

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., p. 357.
Alfred Tyrnauer later contributed to the *Saturday Evening Post* a graphic account of how this statement came to be issued, with a photostat of Bose's draft: 'I can well remember the strange picture of the modernly furnished Vienna hotel room in which the two striking Orientals (Patel and Bose) sealed their portentous agreement. Following a telephone invitation, I visited Patel one day in the fall of 1933, in the Vienna 'Hotel de France' where he was dividing his bed-ridden days between his physicians and his friends.'

"After a cordial welcome Patel explained, 'We are about to issue a joint declaration against the passive resistance policy of Gandhi. We are both of the opinion that India has arrived at a stage of revolution where a more active policy is called for. There is a little difficulty with the wording to be smoothed out. My young friend Bose, believes that an attack must be sharp like a dagger, whereas I hold one should not be careless in one's own house. Bose interrupted, 'Gandhi is an old, useless piece of furniture. He has done good service in his time, but he is an obstacle now.'

'May be, he is', agreed Patel, reluctantly, as an active politician. But his name is of great and permanent value. We must take that into consideration.

"Patel looked at me with his intelligent dark eyes, 'For old friendship's sake, I want you to be the first correspondent to get this joint statement which might possibly be of far-reaching importance', he concluded. 'It might put an end, once and for all, to the useless Round Table discussions by frightening some people to seek cover under the table.'
"I ventured to observe that the Round Table discussion might serve to clear the issue even if they had shown no definite results".

"Bose interrupted his writings: No real change in History has ever been achieved by discussions, he said.

'Well, the only alternative is violence', he answered, 'revolution, war, under the present tension-laden circumstances even a world conflagration'.

'What of it?' retorted Bose passionately, 'India can well afford to bring a bloody sacrifice for her liberation. Three hundred and fifty million miserable lives are waiting for deliverance'.

"Patel turned to me with a faint smile. 'He speaks the mind of young India', he said slowly. 'It may be a brilliant and may be a foolish one. It may be creative or it may be suicidal. But it is here and if the Gods are thirsty, what can we do but offer our blood?'"

"Bose finished writing. I looked over his shoulder and saw the sentence: 'We are clearly of opinion that, as a political leader, Mahatma Gandhi has failed', then, 'The form of non-co-operation will have to be changed into a militant one and the fight for freedom will have to be waged on all fronts'.

"He handed the script to Patel, who finally gave his approval and signed it."
"It was Patel's last political act. Soon afterwards he died of a heart attack."²⁸

Vithaibhai Patel and Bose were wrong in their verdict on Gandhi, which did no credit to their political judgement. So anxious were the people of India over Gandhi's fast, that little notice was taken of their statement. What was meant to be a deadly bomb, proved a damp squib.

In July 1933, a conference of important Congressmen then out of prison, was held at Poona. It could be regarded as an unofficial meeting of the All India Congress Committee. Soon afterwards the Mahatma approached the Viceroy for an interview but all that he got, was a humiliating rebuff. He and some of his closest followers, thereupon, proceeded to start civil disobedience individually and by August 1933, they found themselves in prison once again. This time even the Mahatma's incarceration did not create a great stir.

Gandhi was released three days later but confined within the limits of Poona city. He defied the order, was rearrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Back in jail, he commenced a fast on August 16, to protect against the denial of the facilities for the promotion of the campaign against untouchability which he had been receiving during his earlier incarceration. His condition deteriorated rapidly and he was released.

Gandhi devoted his energies for the next six years to the betterment of the Harijans and village uplift. In September 1933, he handed over the Sabarmati Ashram to Harijan Society and shifted his residence to another

ashram at Wardha. "India lives in her villages, not in her cities," he said.29
"When I succeed in ridding the villages of the poverty, I have won
Swaraj." "No sophistry, no jugglery in figures," he emphasised, "can explain away the evidence that the skeletons of many villagers present to
the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the
town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for
this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history."30

In the meanwhile the Council-entry movement was gaining
strength. A conference was held at Delhi by the Congress leaders who
favoured Council-entry under the chairmanship of Dr. Ansari. Gandhi
did not want to stand in their way and issued a statement on 7th April,
1934 suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement. Once the movement
was suspended the Government gave up repressive measures and
released all political prisoners and also lifted the ban on the Congress.

So it was decided to hold the Congress session in October 1934, in
Bombay. This session is important in many ways.

First, it was held after 3 years. Secondly, the Congress had decided
to contest for the entry into legislatures. Thirdly, Gandhi announced his
decision to resign from the Congress. Gandhi's reason for leaving the
Congress in his own words was: "I see that the educated and the
intelligent sections of the Congressmen no longer have faith in my
programme of work. In particular they have no faith in the spinning-
wheel and khaddar. Out of personal consideration for me or because they
are afraid that if they opposed me openly they could not hope for
success, they are refraining from open opposition and support my
programme although they are not genuinely convinced of its merit. I am

29 Harijan, 04-04-1936, p. 63.
30 Ibid., 20-02-1937, p. 16.
thus a burden to the Congress. Because of me, the bulk of the Congressmen are unable to think independently or behave independently. I think, therefore, it would be appropriate and in the interest of the Congress, that I should withdraw myself from the Congress."\textsuperscript{31} This decision of Gandhi came as a shock to all the Congress workers. C. Rajagopalachari, Abul Kalam Azad and others appealed to Gandhi to reconsider his decision since his resignation from the Congress at that moment could prejudice the public and affect adversely the success of the Congress in elections.

Once Gandhi had left Congress, he concentrated on removal of untouchability and collecting funds for Harijan work.

Bose and Gandhi differed not only on the means to gain freedom. Bose wanted to see a plan for Free India. Gandhi's aim was to win freedom, the reconstruction of India's economic structure and the writing of the constitution could wait. Gandhi would not mind if that were done by some other person or party later on. To Bose the three were inseparable. According to Hugh Toye, Bose was a "Socialist and could not leave the reconstruction of India to capitalism, nor could he trust the making of a constitution to the processes of democracy. The hand that won freedom must not lose its grip. Otherwise, he argued, the vested interests, parasites and toadies now waiting on the British would rob the people of the prize for which they had fought. No, after freedom let the constitution and the Socialist State be established: let the strong hand that made them retain control until they were firm enough to stand against the corrupting influences democracy would liberate."\textsuperscript{32}

Bose believed that Gandhi had failed for five reasons. He had failed because he had not understood his opponents because he had not made a plan, because he had not sought international help, because he tended to trust the British, and because he hovered between his two roles, political leader and world teacher. The future of India, said Bose, lay with those radical and militant forces that will be able to undergo the sacrifice and suffering necessary for winning freedom, for the strength of a leader depends not on the largeness but on the character of one's following. Equally he believed that his appreciation of the opposition and of his own following was correct, and that he would consequently succeed.  

He has failed because the strength of a leader depends not on the largeness—but on the character—of one's following. With a much smaller following, other leaders have been able to liberate their country—while the Mahatma with a much larger following has not. He has failed, because while he has understood the character of his own people—he has not understood the character of his opponents. The logic of the Mahatma is not the logic which appeals to John Bull. He has failed, because his policy of putting all his cards on the table will not do. We have to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's—and in a political fight, the art of diplomacy cannot be dispensed with. He has failed, because he has not made use of the international weapon. If we desire to win our freedom through non-violence, diplomacy and international propaganda are essential. He has failed, because the false unity of interests that are inherently opposed is not a source of strength but a source of weakness in political warfare. The future of India rests exclusively with those radical and militant forces that will be able to undergo the sacrifice and suffering necessary for winning freedom. Last but not least, the Mahatma has failed, because he had to 

33 Ahluwalia, K. and Shashi Ahluwalis, Netaji and Gandhi, op. cit., p. 100.
play a dual role in one person— the role of the leader of an enslaved people and that of a world-teacher, who has a new doctrine to preach. It is this duality which has made him at once the irreconcilable foe of the Englishman, according to Mr. Winston Churchill, and the best policeman of the Englishman according to Miss Ellen Wilkinson.  

“What of the future? What role will the Mahatma play in the days to come? Will he be able to emancipate his dear country? Several factors have to be considered. So far - as his health and vitality are concerned, it is highly probable that he will be spared many years of active and useful public life and his determination to achieve something tangible in the direction of his country's freedom will keep up his spirits. So far as his popularity and reputation are concerned, they will endure till the end of his life — because unlike other political leaders, the Mahatma's popularity and reputation do not depend on his political leadership — but largely on his character. The question we have to consider, however, is whether the Mahatma will continue his political activities or whether he will voluntarily withdraw himself from active politics — of which there are indications at the present moment — and devote himself exclusively to social and humanitarian work. A prediction in the case of the Mahatma is a hazardous proposition. Nevertheless, one thing is certain. The Mahatma will not play second fiddle to anyone. As long as it will be possible for him to guide the political movement, he will be there — but if the composition or the mentality of the Congress changes, he may possibly retire from active politics. That retirement may be temporary or permanent. A temporary retirement is like a strategic retreat and is not of much significance because the hero will come back into the picture once again. We have had experience of the Mahatma's retirement from active

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politics once before - from 1924 to 1928. Whether there is a possibility of the Mahatma's permanent retirement depends to some extent at least, on the attitude of the British Government. If he is able to achieve something tangible for his country, then his position will be unassailable among his countrymen. Nothing succeeds like success, and the Mahatma's success will confirm public faith in his personality and in his weapon of non-violent non-co-operation. But if the British attitude continues to be as uncompromising as it is today, public faith in the Mahatma as a political leader and in the method of non-violent non-co-operation will be considerably shaken. In that event they will naturally turn to a mere radical leadership and policy.\textsuperscript{35}

In spite of the unparalleled popularity and reputation which the Mahatma has among his countrymen and will continue to have regardless of his future political career, there is no doubt that the unique position of the Mahatma is due to his political leadership. The Mahatma himself distinguishes between his mass-popularity and his political following and he is never content with having merely the former. Whether he will be able to retain that political following in the years to come in the event of the British attitude being as unbending as it is today, will depend on his ability to evolve a more radical policy. Will he be able to give up the attempt to unite all the elements in the country and boldly identify himself with the more radical forces? In that case nobody can possibly supplant him. The hero of the present phase of the Indian struggle will then be the hero of the next phase as well. But what does the balance of probability indicate?

The Patna meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in May 1934, affords an interesting study in this connection. The Mahatma

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 296.
averted the Swarajist revolt by advocating council-entry himself. But the Swarajists of 1934, are not the dynamic Swarajists of 1922-23. Therefore, while he was able to win them over, he could not avoid alienating the Left Wingers, many of whom have now combined to form the Congress Socialist Party. This is the first time that a Socialist Party has been started openly within the Indian National Congress, and it is extremely probable that economic issues will henceforth be brought to the fore. With the clarification of economic issues, parties will be more scientifically organised within the Congress and also among the people in general.

The Congress Socialists appear at the moment to be under the influence of Fabian Socialism and some of their ideas and shibboleths were the fashion several decades ago. Nevertheless, the Congress Socialists do represent a radical force within the Congress and in the country. Many of those who could have helped them actively are not available at present. When their assistance will be forthcoming, the Party will be able to make more headway.

Throughout 1938, Bose frequently advised the Congress Socialist Party to form a left bloc, but the party did not do any such thing. The mistake of the Congress Socialist Party was that it talked too much about socialism, which was after all a thing of the future. According to Bose, “India’s immediate requirements were an uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism and methods of struggle more effective than what Mahatma Gandhi had produced. Gandhism had been found wanting, because it was wedded to non-violence and therefore contemplated a compromise with Britain for the solution of the Indian problem. Moreover, it lacked a proper understanding of international affairs and of the importance of an international crisis for achieving India’s liberation. A party was needed which could remedy these defects and bring about the
complete liberation of India. Though not visible to the public, the breach between myself and the Gandhi wing was now wide.\textsuperscript{36}

At the present moment another challenge to the Mahatma's policy has crystallised within the Congress in the Congress Nationalist Party led by Pandit Malaviya. The dispute has arisen over the Communal Award of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. The issue is, however, a comparatively minor one, because official Congress Party and the Congress Nationalist Party are agreed in the total rejection of the White Paper of which the Communal Award is an integral part. Only the official Congress Party is foolishly afraid of openly condemning the Communal Award. Since the Congress Nationalist Party does not represent a more radical force in the country, the ultimate challenge to the Mahatma's leadership cannot come from that direction.

One definite prediction can be made at this stage Bose wrote: “namely, that future parties within the Congress will be based on economic issues. It is not improbable that in the event of the Left Wingers capturing the Congress machinery, there will be a further secession from the Right and the setting up of a new organisation of the Right Wingers like the Indian Liberal Federation of today. It will of course take some years to clarify the economic issues in the public mind—so that parties may be organised on the basis of a programme and ideology. Till the issues are clarified, Mahatma Gandhi's political supremacy will remain unchallenged, even if there is a temporary retirement as in 1924. But once the clarification takes place, his political following will be greatly affected. As has been already indicated, the Mahatma has endeavoured in the past to hold together all the warring elements - landlord and peasant, capitalist and labour, rich and poor. That has been

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 297.
the secret of his success, as surely as it will be the ultimate cause of his failure. If all the warring elements resolve to carry on the struggle for political freedom, the internal social struggle will be postponed for a long time and men holding the position of the Mahatma will continue to dominate the public life of the country. But that will not be the case. The vested interests, the ‘haves’, will in future fight shy of the ‘have-nots’ in the political fight and will gradually incline towards the British Government. The logic of history will, therefore, follow its inevitable course. The political struggle and the social struggle will have to be conducted simultaneously. The Party that will win political freedom for India will be also the Party that will win social and economic freedom for the masses. Mahatma Gandhi has rendered and will continue to render phenomenal service to his country. But India’s salvation will not be achieved under his leadership.”

Gandhi continued to be cool towards all that Bose was doing. To the Mahatma taking to arms, even to fight a just cause such as the nation’s freedom, was anathema. He held non-violence above all else. He believed, with all the strength at his command, that even the mightiest tyrant would buckle down to the pressure mounted by the Soul Force. Gandhi did not denigrate Bose for resorting to arms. But he never ceased to believe that Bose had chosen the wrong path. Gandhi did not question Bose’s patriotism. He only challenged the wisdom of the path chosen by Bose.

But their political differences did not affect their personal relations. In a letter dated April 2, 1939, Gandhi wrote “Though we have discussed sharp differences of opinion between us, I am quite sure that our private relations will not suffer in the least. If they are from the heart,

37 Ibid., p. 298
as I believe they are, they will bear the strain of these differences.” A few days earlier Gandhi had suggested that Bose should come to Delhi and stay with him. "I undertake to nurse you to health while we are slowly conferring".39

Gandhi never cast aspersions on Bose's motives or imputed the taint of fascism to him. He only emphasised that "Bose's ways are mistaken; they are not my ways". Replying to a correspondent who had asked: "Is not Subhas Babu right when he ascribes to the Congress High Command, including you, the reformist and the liberal tendency?" Gandhi wrote in the Harijan in January 1940: "Of course, he (Bose) is right. Dadabhai was a great reformist. Gokhale was a great liberal and so was Pherozesha Mehta. So, too, was Surendranth Banerjea. They were in their days the nation's tribunes. We are their heirs. What Subhas Babu in his impatience to go forward forgets is that it is possible for me to compete with him in the love for the land, in spite of our having reformist and liberal tendencies. But I have told him he has youth before him and he must have the dash of a youth. He is not held down by me or anybody else. He is not the man to be so held. It is his own prudence that holds him. And in that way, he is as much reformist and liberal as I am. Only I with my age know it, and he in his youth is blind to the good that is in him. Let my correspondent be assured that inspite of our different outlooks and in spite of the Congress ban on him, when he leads in non-violent battle they will find following him, as I shall find him following me if I overtake him. But I must live in the hope that we shall gain our common end without another fight." 40

39 Ibid., p. 152.
Gandhi reiterated the same advice to Bose when the latter called him at Sewagram in June 1940. A poignancy attaches to these talks since it proved this was the last meeting of the two stalwarts, the last occasion when they meet. Nathalal Parikh who was specifically asked by Bose to be present has recorded their talks. Parikh wrote: “After listening to Bose at great length Mahatmaji said: ‘Subhas, I have always loved you. You are keen on launching some mass movement. You thrive when there is fight. You are terribly emotional, but I had to think of several factors. I am an old man now and must not do anything in haste. I have the greatest admiration for you. Regarding your love for the country and determination to achieve its freedom, you are second to none. Your sincerity is transparent. Your spirit of self-sacrifice and suffering cannot be surpassed by anybody. But I would like these qualities to be used at a more opportune moment.’

"Subhas said that that was the most opportune time and that it was impossible to think of any other situation in which India could start the struggle. Gandhi replied: 'Why do you think we cannot get better opportunities later on? I am sure we will have many such opportunities. Whether England wins or loses this war, she will be weakened by it; she will not have the strength to shoulder the responsibilities of administering the country, and with some slight effort on our part she will have no alternative but to recognise India's Independence. Both politically and morally, I feel, we should not be hasty in launching a movement at the present juncture. My conscience tells me to wait for better times'.

"Subhas said, 'Bapu, if you give a call, the whole nation will respond to it'. Gandhi replied, 'even if the nation is ready, at a moment like this, I must not do anything that is inopportune.' Subhas said, 'If you

41 Ibid., Vol. LXXII, pp. 259-60.
think that this moment is inopportune, I want your blessing for starting such a movement.’

"Gandhiji: 'You don't need my blessings, Subhas. How can I bless a movement which I consider inopportune, and which I feel is morally unjustifiable now? You have got the qualities of a great leader, and if your conscience tells you that this is the best time for striking out, go ahead and do your best. If you come out successful, I shall be the first to congratulate you. But my advice to you is not to be hasty. You are too emotional, and you must realise that everyone who talks of supporting you will not do so when the testing time comes. So be careful in whatever you do. You can always write to me and consult me. My heart is entirely with you, my love for you and for your family is great, and therefore, I would not like you to do anything that will inflict any unnecessary suffering. I would like to tell you again that India will get hell of opportunities in future, and will be in a better position to give a light to England than it is now.'

Bose had maintained all along that it was only when Britain was involved in war that we could fight it with the maximum chances of success, that Britain's difficulty was India’s opportunity. Bose fled to Germany to wage a war against Britain. After Bose's escape to Germany Gandhi had developed a soft corner for Bose as is testified by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his book India Wins Freedom. To quote Azad:

“Subhas escape to Germany had made a great impression on Gandhiji. He had not formerly approved many of Bose’s actions, but now I found a change in his outlook. It convinced me that he admired the courage and resourcefulness that Subhas Bose had displayed in making his

\[42\] Ibid.
escape from India. His admiration for Subhas Bose unconsciously coloured his view about the whole war situation.

“This admiration was also one of the factors which clouded the discussions during the Cripps Mission to India….There was a news flash that Subhas Bose had died in an air crash. This created a sensation in India and Gandhiji, among others, was deeply moved. He sent a message of condolence to Bose’s mother, in which he spoke in glowing terms about her son and his services to India. Latter on it turned out that the report was false. Cripps, however, complained to me that he had not expected a man like Gandhiji to speak in such glowing terms about Subhas Bose, who had openly sided with the Axis Powers.”

In a conversation with Louis Fischer, an American journalist, on the eve of launching the Quit India movement, Gandhi defended Bose as "patriot of patriots." "He may be misguided. I think he is misguided. I have often opposed Bose. Twice I kept him from becoming the president of the Congress. Finally, he did become the president, although my views differed from him.”

Subhas Bose's regard for Mahatma Gandhi becomes evident from his broadcast speech from Bangkok of October 2, 1943, on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's seventy-fifth birthday. He said "The service which Mahatma Gandhi has rendered to India and to the cause of India's freedom is so unique and unparalleled that his name will be written in letters of gold in our national History for all time". Bose compared Gandhi with Kamal Pasha. He said "The nearest historical

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45 Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), 1962
parallel to Mahatma Gandhi is perhaps Mustapha Kamal Pasha who saved Turkey after the defeat in last world War I and who was acclaimed by the Turks as the Gazi”. 46 He paid a glowing tribute to Gandhi when he said that Gandhi had given the Indians "the two indispensable preconditions for the attainment of independence, namely self-confidence and a countrywide organization which reaches the remotest villages of India.”47

Bose sought Gandhi's blessings through a broadcast on July 6, 1944, when he laid his soul bare before him. He said: "Father of our Nation. In this holy war of India's liberation we ask for your blessings and good wishes.”48

It is likely that Gandhi did not hear this broadcast, but one feels that his blessings were always with Bose. During 1945 and 1946, Gandhi gained personal knowledge of the exploits of Bose and his I.N.A. and paid unreserved tributes to them. Moreover, Gandhi had not the least hesitation in hailing Bose as "Netaji".49 In Gandhi's opinion the greatest and the most lasting achievement of Netaji was that he abolished all distinctions of caste, creed and class. Bose was not a mere Hindu or a mere Bengali. He was an Indian first and last. What was more, he fired all under him with the same zeal, so that they forgot in his presence all distinctions, and acted as one man.

Gandhi visited the I.N.A. prisoners in their detention camps more than once. In an address to them he observed: "Netaji was like a son to me. I came to know him as a lieutenant full of promise under the late Deshbandhu Das. His last message to the I.N.A. was that whilst on

46  Ibid.
47  Ibid.
49  Ibid., pp. 339.
foreign soil they had fought with arms, on their return to India they would have to serve the country as soldiers of non-violence under the guidance and leadership of the Congress.  

"Though the I.N.A. failed in its immediate objective, it lends a lot to its credit of which it might well be proud. The greatest among its achievements was to gather together, under one banner, men from all religions and races of India, and to infuse in them the spirit of solidarity and oneness, to the utter exclusion of all communal and parochial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate."

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50 Ibid., Vol. LXXXIV, pp. 186-88.  
51 Ibid.